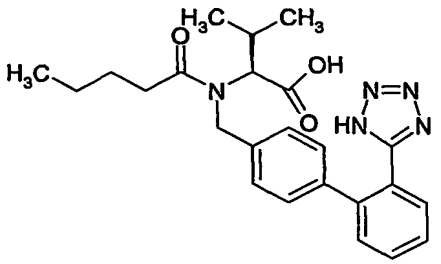
We claim:

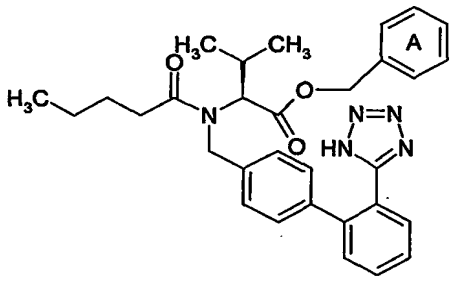
1) A process for the preparation of valsartan of formula I:



—— I

which comprises the steps of:

a) hydrolyzing the compound of the general formula II:



—— II

wherein ring A is substituted or unsubstituted phenyl group,

with an excess alkali metal hydroxide;

b) washing the aqueous layer containing reaction products of step (a) with an organic solvent;

c) acidifying the aqueous layer using an acid; and

d) isolating valsartan of formula I from the reaction mixture of step (c).

2) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ring A is phenyl.

3) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ring A is alkyl, halo, hydroxyl or nitro substituted phenyl.

4) A process according to claim 3, wherein the ring A is m-nitro phenyl or m-fluoro phenyl.

5) A process according to claim 1, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide.

6) A process according to claim 1, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is sodium hydroxide.

7) A process according to claim 1, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is used in an amount more than one molar equivalent relative to the compound of the formula II.

8) A process according to claim 7, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is about 2 to 20 molar equivalent relative to the compound of the formula II.

9) A process according to claim 8, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is about 3 to 8 molar equivalent relative to the compound of the formula II.

10) A process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrolysis is conducted in a mixed solution composed of water and a hydrophilic organic solvent.

11) A process according to claim 10, wherein the hydrophilic organic solvent is selected from methanol, ethanol, propanol, isopropanol and tert-butanol.

12) A process according to claim 1, wherein the organic solvent is selected from benzene, toluene, xylene, n-hexane, n-heptane, cyclohexane, petroleum ether, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, tert-butyl methyl ether and a mixture thereof.

13) A process according to claim 12, wherein the organic solvent is selected from n-heptane, cyclohexane, n-hexane, petroleum ether and diisopropyl ether.

14) A process according to claim 13, wherein the organic solvent is n-heptane.

15) A process according to claim 13, wherein the organic solvent is diisopropyl ether.

16) A process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous layer is acidified in step (c) to below about pH 7.0.

17) A process according to claim 16, wherein the aqueous layer is acidified to about pH 4.0 to 1.0.

18) A process according to claim 17, wherein the aqueous layer is acidified to about pH 3.0 to 1.0.

19) A process according to claim 1, wherein the acid used in step (c) is hydrochloric acid or sulfuric acid.

20) A process according to claim 19, wherein the acid is hydrochloric acid.

21) A process according to claim 1, wherein the valsartan is isolated in step (d) by extracting into an organic solvent followed by removing the solvent or precipitating valsartan.

22) A process according to claim 21, wherein the organic solvent is selected from methylene dichloride, chloroform, carbon tetrachloride, ethylene dichloride, ethyl acetate, methyl acetate, isopropyl acetate, tert-butyl acetate, ethyl formate, methyl formate and a mixture thereof.

23) A process according to claim 22, wherein the organic solvent is selected from methylene dichloride, chloroform and ethyl acetate.

24) A process according to claim 23, wherein the organic solvent is methylene dichloride and ethyl acetate.

25) A process according to claim 23, wherein the organic solvent is ethyl acetate.